

VIRGINIA

WILDLIFE

SEPTEMBER 2005

TWO DOLLARS





Colonel W. Gerald Massengill Interim Director

As the 2005 hunting season begins, and thousands of dove hunters take to the fields throughout Virginia, I am pleased to tell you about a couple of new opportunities that will serve to enhance the sport of hunting in the Commonwealth. The first involves a regulation that was adopted at the June meeting of the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries to allow the use of crossbows by all hunters. The second involves the establishment of the mandatory Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Stamp, and we expect both initiatives to be beneficial to our hunting community and to our wildlife resources.

By expanding the use of crossbows, the Board is looking to provide a bow hunting experience that is more easily accessible to youth, women, and disabled individuals, and, therefore, attract more hunters. A crossbow license will be required to hunt with a crossbow during any archery season, including the urban archery season. Hunters who use both conventional archery equipment and crossbows during the archery season will need to purchase both archery and crossbow licenses. However, they may hunt with traditional archery equipment and/or a crossbow during the general firearms season without purchasing an archery or crossbow license. Disabled hunters who had previously needed a doctor's certification to use a crossbow (in addition to purchasing an archery license) need now only purchase the crossbow license when hunting with a crossbow during the archery season.

The 2005 General Assembly passed legislation establishing a mandatory Migratory Waterfowl Conservation Stamp required of all persons 16 years of age and older when hunting or taking any migratory waterfowl (ducks, geese, brant and swans) within the Commonwealth. The monies generated from the sale of the stamp will be placed in the De-



partment's Game Protection Fund in a newly created Stamp Fund and will be used to offset the administrative cost associated with the production and issuance of the stamp. More importantly and far-reaching, however, is a provision in the legislation that calls for the Department to use the remaining funds to protect, preserve, restore, enhance and develop waterfowl habitat in Virginia. It will also offer the Department the ability to work with appropriate nonprofit organizations on cooperative waterfowl habitat improvement projects. Through the purchase of the new mandatory waterfowl stamp, waterfowl hunters and conservation organizations can expect to have a direct impact on wetland and waterfowl conservation in Virginia.

For more information about crossbows and other hunting regulations and to learn more about the mandatory Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Conservation Stamp and the work it supports, I encourage you to pick up a copy of the new Hunting & Trapping in Virginia 2005-2006 Regulation booklet or visit the Department's Web site at [www.dgf.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov).



The artwork of Virginia native, Guy Crittenden, was chosen for the new 2005 Virginia Waterfowl Stamp and Print.

Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

Commonwealth of Virginia
Mark R. Warner, Governor

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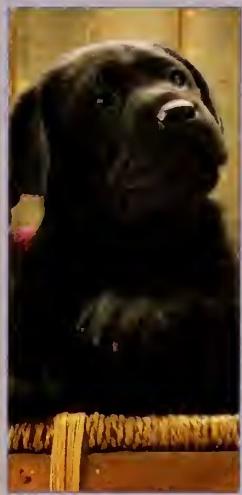
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SEPTEMBER CONTENTS



About the cover:
Labrador retrievers have consistently remained one of the most widely owned purebred dogs in America. The breed actually originated in Canada on the island of Newfoundland and not in Labrador

as the name suggests. Their popularity is due in part to their intelligence, loyalty and willingness to work hard. Labrador retrievers make great pets and are sought after by hunters for their tracking and retrieving abilities.

©Dwight Dyke

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

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A Love of Labs

The American Labrador retriever is considered to be the ultimate hunting dog. But have you ever considered the English lab?

by Tee Clarkson
photos ©Dwight Dyke

Janis Hawk stood over a pan of frying sausage that Saturday morning, cooking breakfast for herself, her husband Dennis, and their young son Dennis Jr. Glancing down at the paper while she cooked, Janis noticed an ad: **English Labradors for Sale \$150.** When she mentioned to her husband Dennis that it might be nice to have a dog, he stood up, cut off the stove, hopped in the car, and left the sausage to cool in the pan, uneaten. That was 20 years ago.

Today the backyard of the Hawk household is a maze of fences and pens, each filled with an English Labrador or two. All can trace their ancestry back to the original chocolate female the Hawks bought that Saturday morning. Her name was Longwood Spicy Brown Sugar, but they called her "Sugar" for short.



When the Hawks spotted the young pup with a cowlick on her forehead, they knew she was the one. And with a father's pride, Dennis leans back into the doorway of his shop and begins the history of Sugar's life. His eyes suddenly blaze with excitement under the dozens of deer racks lining the green metal rafters above our heads. A taxidermist by trade but a storyteller at heart, Dennis recounts the events of Sugar's first day in the field.

In the darkness before dawn, with 8-month-old Sugar by his side, unsure of what it was exactly that they were doing there, the two eased slowly down a dirt road in Goochland County. Following closely to the edge of an old beaver pond, Sugar sat quietly at Dennis' heel as he dumped a pair of wood ducks from the morning fog into a patch of lily pads some 30 yards from the bank.



Dennis Hawk (above) and his wife Janis (left) have always enjoyed hunting and fishing. For years Dennis has made his living as a taxidermist, skillfully capturing a moment in time for some lucky hunter or angler to enjoy. If you ask Dennis and his wife what really draws them to the outdoors, they would tell you it's the time spent with their son, and their English Labrador retrievers.



Dennis looked down at Sugar, waiting for a response. She sat still. Dennis looked back to the two wood ducks and then down again at Sugar. She remained still. He unloaded his gun and placed it on the bank, looking for something to throw in the vicinity of the fallen birds. All he could find was an old lily pad root that had drifted into some cattails. Breaking off a chunk and waving it in Sugar's face, Dennis let it fly toward the closest wood duck. With the splash, Sugar was gone, returning in



English Labrador retrievers are bred from English stock. Unlike the American bred lab, which is leaner and a bit taller, the English lab is shorter and stockier. Both breeds are highly intelligent and make excellent hunting dogs or family pets.

a few seconds with her first retrieve, a drake. Now hopping and shaking on the bank, Dennis called her over. Reluctantly, she allowed Dennis to take the duck from her mouth. He picked up another lily pad root, and she was on her way to a second retrieve.

"The thing that was amazing," Dennis says, "is that I hadn't even hardly thrown a tennis ball in the yard for her. I had been too busy to train her. I just took her out there to see what would happen."

Dennis now searches a cabinet for a stack of old photos. "That's her right there," he says, pointing to "Sugar" sitting in a cornfield in front of four stoic hunters, a pile of geese laid out in a line in front of them. "That's my son." He points to the young boy on the end.

From Dennis I could sense the power of that day in the photo, sense the importance of spending time in the outdoors with Dennis Jr. and Sugar. He tells me more about his son and his dogs, about his son's graduation from Virginia Tech and working for the Fisheries Department, about his dogs' great retrieves. He shows me more photos: ducks, turkey, deer, more geese. "I always carry a camera" he says. People sometimes make fun of me for taking so many pictures, but I just like to have them." He continues flipping through the old photos. Then I notice a new dog amongst hunters. Sugar is gone. Almost reluctantly I ask, "Who's that?" pointing at a young male lab in a photo. It's Sugar's son Mac.

"Was he any good?" I ask, my eyes drifting to the rafters and a giant set of antlers soon to become part of someone's trophy room.

"Listen to me now, listen to me," Dennis says. He's not the type of guy who would tell you a story about one





Dennis and Janis will be the first to say that raising Labrador retrievers is not easy—it requires a lot of time, patience and devotion. If you're willing to give of yourself as much as your faithful companion, the rewards are well worth it. With their endless desire to please their owner and their ability to quickly learn it's no wonder why so many people fall in love with labs.

of his dogs unless he has your full attention.

"I'm listening," I respond with a chuckle, as I turn from the deer antlers back to a story of Mac disappearing under water for ten seconds and coming up with a crippled duck on Lake Anna in January.

Dennis and his wife now spend much of their time traveling up and down the East Coast, showing their English labs. Achieving champion status requires tremendous dedication. Dennis tells me that Janis once drove from Virginia to Michigan to show a dog on Saturday, then turned around and drove all night back to

Leesburg to show the same dog on Sunday.

He prefers the English lab's stocky build and calm demeanor over the American lab that tends to be taller and more rambunctious. In the field he says there isn't much difference. The American lab is typically faster, but the English lab might have an edge in endurance.

The Hawks have one champion, Smokey Hollow's Tudor Root, and another of their labs, Smokey Hollow's Intimidator Dale, will achieve champion status within the next year. Their dogs have appeared in numerous calendars and magazines over the years, including the *Virginia Wildlife* Outdoor Catalog.

I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to hunt the last week of goose season with Dennis, his son and their young lab, Tootie, who comes directly from Tudor, the Hawks champion. Dennis told me on

For all their hard work the Hawks have been rewarded with the honor of having their dogs reach champion status and have even been featured in numerous calendars and magazines.

the phone that it would be Tootie's first hunt and that he hoped she would get the opportunity to bring back a bird.

I met Dennis and his son at 6:00 a.m. at the Exxon station off the Oilville exit on I-64 West. Somewhat groggy-eyed we packed into his Suburban and were off.

"Where is this place?" Dennis Jr. asked not a minute down the road.

"You haven't been here," Dennis replied. "I only take a select few people to this place."

"I'm surprised I got invited then," Dennis Jr. joked. We all laughed. In





the backseat I thought of all the pictures I had seen of a father, his young son and Sugar.

As the sun rose on a calm, balmy morning in February, the four of us snuck through a stand of pines to the bank of a farm pond in Goochland County, each carrying a handful of decoys and our hopes for Tootie's first retrieve. Not two minutes after reaching the bank, a group of 20 to 30 geese lifted noisily off the water and headed right for us. In the discombobulation that had been loading guns and placing decoys, I was the only one lucky enough to get off several shots. Two geese fell from the group and landed hard in the slick water.

"Great job," Dennis shouted as he turned Tootie loose and pointed to the farthest goose, laying motionless on the pond's surface. She turned and looked back at him, unsure of exactly what it was she was doing there. Dennis placed his gun on the bank and picked up a rock to throw in the vicinity of the goose. With the splash Tootie was gone, returning in several seconds with her first retrieve, a banded goose. Dennis snapped a photo. □

Tee Clarkson is an English teacher at Deep Run High School in Henrico County. In the summer he runs Virginia Fishing Adventures, a fishing camp for kids.

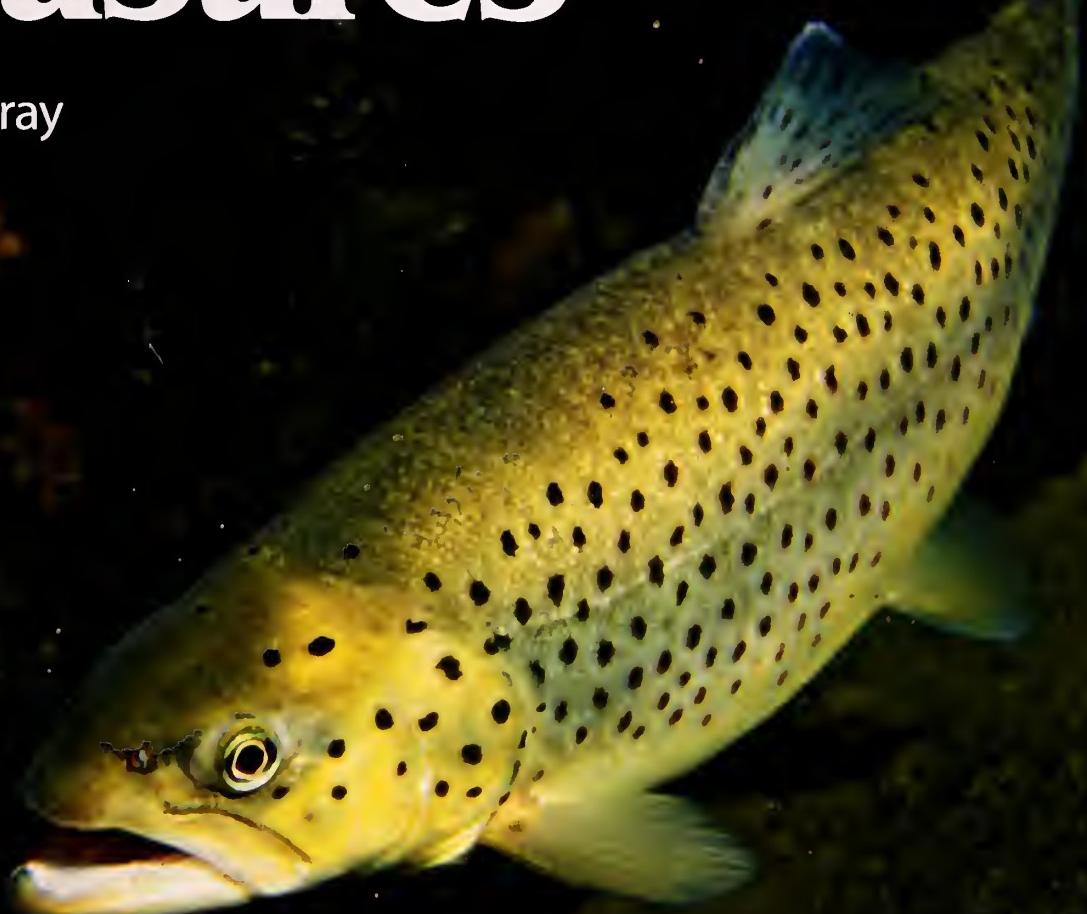
Contact Tee at: tsclarkson@virginiafishingadventures.com.

Visit Dennis and Janice Hawk's Web site at: www.labradors.com.



Autumn's Trout Treasures

by Harry Murray



Catch Virginia's brilliant colors this fall



Murray's Flying Beetle
©Dwight Dyke



Shenk's Cricket
©Dwight Dyke



Mr. Rapidan Ant
©Dwight Dyke



Mr. Rapidan Bead Head Nymph
©Dwight Dyke



Murray's Cranefly Larva
©Dwight Dyke



©Harry Murray

A beautiful wild brook trout rises to sip a natural insect from the surface of a crystal clear mountain stream as the evening sunrays filter through the profusion of brightly colored fall leaves. Witnessing this striking scene quickens the pulse of the angler because he knows late September and October can give him some of the finest trout fishing of the entire season.

The trout in our streams are now larger and wiser than they were earlier in the season requiring that we refine our tactics. This is a very challenging quest but the rewards are exceptionally gratifying.

In order to take advantage of this exciting trout fishing let's look at the tactics and fly patterns, which are effective at this time and some of the streams where one can expect to find good fishing. We'll start with our



Mr. Rapidan
Midge Dry
©Dwight Dyke

Anglers need to be extra cautious when tackling Virginia's mountain trout streams during the fall months. Trout are wary during this time of the year and spook easily. The author likes to use a stealth approach when fishing. He also recommends that it's a good idea to spot your fish first before going one-on-one with them.

small headwater streams and work our way down into the larger streams in the valleys.

Two important things take place in our mountain trout streams in the fall that encourage the trout to feed aggressively and thus improve our fishing. The cool nights cause the water temperatures to drop down to the point that prompts the trout to feed more actively than they did in the warm summer streams. The second factor that sparks trout to feed is that there are great populations of natural terrestrial insects around our mountain streams. Natural beetles, ants and mountain wasps all find their way onto our trout streams and the fish feed heavily upon them.

fall and some excellent late season trout fishing.

The main thing in the back of my mind, as I approach each pool in our mountain streams, is that trout are now extremely wary in the low clear streams. I move in very cautiously, often on my hands and knees, pausing about 20 feet downstream of the pool to study it carefully to locate rising trout or trout on feeding stations.

I practically always start fishing these pools with a Murray's Flying Beetle size 16, because it matches many of the natural insects on the stream and the trout usually take it readily.

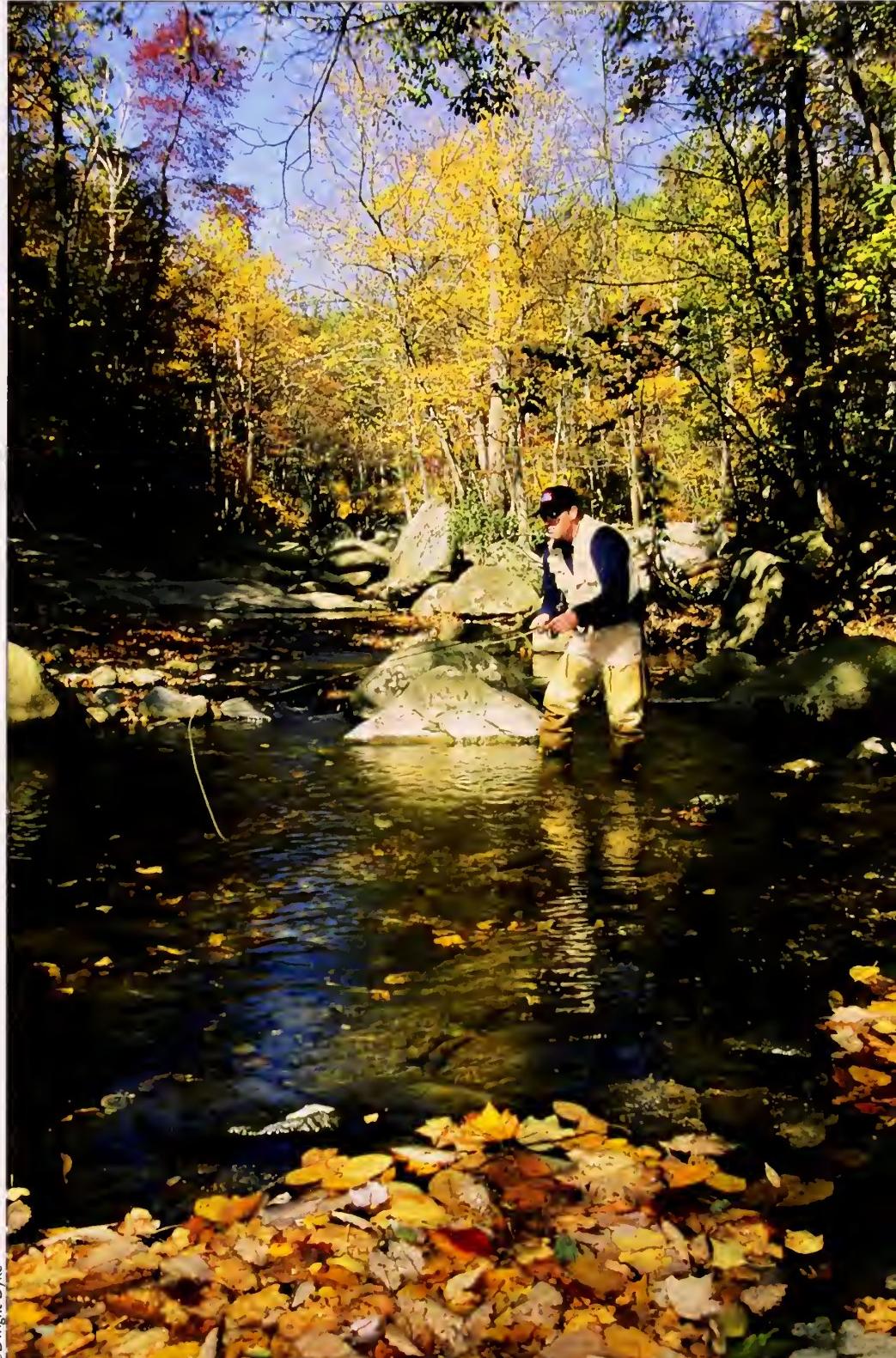
If I spot the trout I cast my Beetle about 2 feet upstream of him using a 9-foot, 6X leader. This usually takes him. By quickly working this trout away from the main part of the pool and gently releasing him in the tail of the pool I can sometimes take several other trout in the same pool. If I don't see rising trout or those on feeding stations I simply cover the nest looking sections in the pool with my Beetle. Undercut banks and shaded runs beside large boulders are especially productive.

Other dry flies, which I like on mountain trout streams in the fall, are Shenk's Cricket size 16 and the Mr. Rapidan Ant sizes 16 and 18.

If you plan to fish our mountain trout streams into late October and November you may need to go to nymphs to be consistently successful. When the water temperature stays below 40 degrees for about a week the trout slow down in their feeding. However, drifting a nymph right in front of them on the stream bottom can take some that hold in the deepest pools and runs where they find protection from the currents around the large boulders.

My favorite technique on Virginia's mountain streams in late November is the upstream dead drifting method. Here the trout strikes can be very subtle and difficult for us to dis-

©Dwight Dyke



cern. It is imperative that we detect the strike within a second to a second and a half because by this time he knows he's made a mistake and ejects our nymph. I find that if I place one Scientific Angler's Indicator 3 feet above the nymph and a second one 3 feet further up the leader I can quickly see the trout take and set the nymph in time to hook him. I prefer these indicators to the floating type, because I can effectively fish pools of all depths.

Two of my favorite nymphs for our mountain streams in the fall are the Mr. Rapidan Bead Head Nymph size 12 and the Murray's Cranefly larva size 12.

If you are fishing mountain streams that hold wild brook trout populations most of us believe it is not good to stress these trout by fishing for them when they are spawning. This varies from mid-October to early November.

A beautiful mountain trout stream that gives us good action in the fall is Stewart's Creek upstream of the village of Lambsburg. Big Wilson Creek, east of Damascus, is another excellent stream in the southern part of the state. Further north in the Shenandoah National Park are White Oak Canyon Run and the Hughes River, both are excellent fall trout streams.

In October our delayed harvest streams give us excellent trout fishing. Many of these streams are very rich and produce some very dense hatches that bring the trout to the surface where you will spot their delicate simple rise forms on the flat pools. There are two major hatches



©Harry Murray

here in the fall and the trout can be very selective when they are feeding on these insects so I like to match the naturals.

The heaviest hatches on our delayed harvest streams are the chironomid midges and I match this with the Mr. Rapidan Midge Dry in sizes 18, 20 and 22. The second hatch is the beatis mayfly and I match these with the Beatis Parachute Dry Fly sizes 18 and 22. When I'm on these streams I keep an eye out for these surface feeders because I like to go one on one with them using these small drys on 6X or 7X leaders.

If I didn't see rising trout I go underwater with flies, which are large

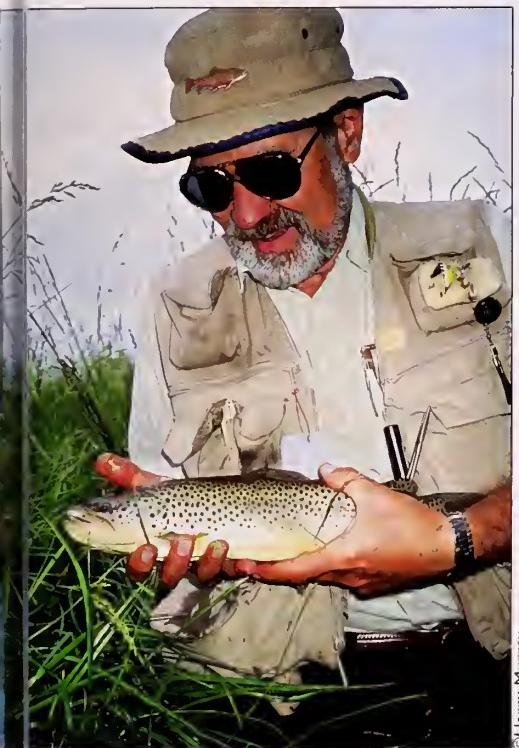
Above: In the fall, brown trout are prompted to feed on the surface by the abundance of beatis mayflies providing excellent fishing. Right: Large brown trout are just a few of the rewards for the diligent angler who ventures out during the early fall season.

enough to attract their attention. Three of my favorites are the Olive Strymph size 10, Pearl Marauder size 12 and Black Marauder size 12. An especially effective underwater technique on our delayed harvest streams is the "bounce retrieve." This is achieved by wading upstream and casting straight upstream. After the fly sinks deeply the fly rod is lifted slowly to a 45-degree angle. This causes the fly to swim up through the stream in a very realistic manner. If this does not bring a strike I drop the rod back down permitting the fly to sink deeply again. I continue this lifting and dropping action every 5 feet of the drift. Fishing this bounce retrieve all the way up through the deep runs and pools in our delayed harvest streams will give you many nice trout.

Two of my favorite delayed harvest streams that give me great fishing are Passage Creek east of Edin-



Olive Strymph
©Harry Murray



©Harry Murray

burg and Back Creek west of Warm Springs.

Our largest trout streams can produce some of the easiest fishing in the fall. The water is now cool and these streams are stocked quite generously. Most of these streams hold many minnows and the trout feed heavily upon them so I usually use streamers, which match the minnows. Three of my favorite streamers to use in these large streams in the fall are Shenk's White Streamer size 8, Murray's Sculpin size 8 and the Mr. Rapidan Streamer size 10.

The technique for fishing these streamers is easy to master and many beginning anglers in our schools catch most of their best fish with this method. I like to wade into the stream right where the riffle dumps into the main pool downstream. The first cast is made about 30 feet straight across the stream. After the streamer sinks close to the stream bottom I use a 6 inch line hand stripping action every five seconds to swim my fly deeply where the trout are holding. Each successive cast is 5 feet longer until I've covered the entire stream out to about 50 feet. I then wade down the stream pausing every 10 feet to repeat the above sequence. This

method enables you to show your streamer to every trout in that part of stream.

If you find pools, which are over 5 feet deep or if fall rains have produced very fast currents, a tactic I call "sweeping a streamer" can help you get your streamers down very deeply. Here I position myself right beside the deep run I plan to fish. My first cast is 20 feet long and is made up and across stream at a 45-degree angle. The streamer is allowed to sink on a slack line and by watching the two Scientific Anglers Indicators I can tell when it is close to the stream bottom. At this point I pick up the slack line with my line hand and swing the rod tip in a downstream arc in order to keep a tight line on the streamer. This enables me to quickly feel the strike and set the hook on the trout.

Each successive cast is made up and out 5 feet further until I've covered all of the stream out to about 30 feet then I wade downstream 10 feet and repeat the sequence. Trying to cover runs more than 30 feet out with this method is not very successful because the fast crossing currents prevent us from getting the depth we need with our streamers.

Three of my favorite large trout streams to fish in the fall are Big Stoney Creek west of Edinburg, the Hidden Valley of Jackson River north of Warm Springs, and the Bullpasture River upstream from Williamsville.

Yes, fall is a great time to fish for trout in Virginia because the mountain colors are brilliant and the trout feed very aggressively. □

Harry Murray is the owner of Murray's Fly Shop in Edinburg, Va. He has written numerous books and articles on fly-fishing and hosts a very informative Web site at www.murraysflyshop.com, where each Friday you can find updated information on stream conditions and fishing report.

Additional Information

Maps and detailed books of these and other trout streams in Virginia are available from the Shenandoah Publishing Company, P. O. Box 156, Edinburg, VA 22824; phone (540) 984-4212.



Beatis Parachute
Dry Fly
©Dwight Dyke



Pearl Marauder
©Dwight Dyke



Black Marauder
©Dwight Dyke



Shenk's White Streamer
©Dwight Dyke



Murray's Sculpin
©Dwight Dyke



Mr. Rapidan Streamer
©Dwight Dyke

Boating Skills

by Jim Crosby

Recreational boating requires a unique blend of physical skills and knowledge. Recreational boating has so many facets that it becomes difficult to drop it into any single category.

Some people boat to relax and pass the time, while others attack it in many competitive ways such as water skiing, scuba diving, fishing, hunting, touring, cruising and boating competition itself.

Boating is something one can enjoy with a minimal investment of a few dollars or they can spend millions in international competition like the America's Cup. The one thing they all have in common is they must develop some minimal skills in boat handling and they all must comply with the law.

Most people get into recreational boating with only a vision of being on the water to enjoy the beautiful scenery, the warm sunshine and cool breezes. The first splash of cold water hits them in the face when they learn they must register the vessel, have safety equipment onboard that meets the requirements of the law, and there are rules of the road on the water that they must know and follow.

As more and more people take advantage of recreational boating opportunities on Virginia's waterways, taking an approved boating safety course makes good common sense. There are many courses being offered including the basic Boat Virginia (state course), which is offered free of charge.



Blends and Knowledge

The idea that it might be a good move to seek some training and education usually occurs at, or just before, the point of purchase of one's first watercraft. Sometimes the idea doesn't hit home until they endure the first scary experience on the water. Hopefully, it will occur to them before they suffer a serious loss of property or a life-threatening injury to themselves or someone else.

The Commandant of the Coast Guard has been quoted as saying, "Those who take boating classes offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Power Squadrons or the state boating administrators are not likely to become the subject of a search and rescue mission."

With that strong belief in the importance of boating education for the recreational boating community, there are many opportunities available in Virginia.

Initially, boating skills and knowledge was taught exclusively in the classroom. Technology has added home study, and online, electronic or e-learn-



©Jim Crosby

ing. Virginians now have a choice of taking a course in the traditional classroom setting, taking a home-study course or sitting down at the computer and taking a class over the Internet.

There are many boating safety courses being offered to the Virginia boating public, which provide useful and necessary information. General boating education classes vary from 8 to 28 hours, depending on which course you take. Most instructors are volunteers and are certified in the field of boating through the U.S. Power Squadrons, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries—the boating law enforcement agency in Virginia. Many of the classes, including Virginia's "Boat Virginia" are FREE! According to state records, 15,625 people are registered as having taken a boating course since the year 2000.

The benefits are numerous in taking an approved boating safety course in Virginia. First of all, participants learn boating safety skills, equipment requirements and pertinent laws. Additionally, course participants learn

how to avoid and prepare for boating emergencies. Put altogether, the course helps them become better informed and safer boaters. Those who successfully complete an approved course are often provided premium discounts by the major insurance companies. You should consider taking part in a boating safety course to make sure our waterways are as safe as they can be and that you only have fun without injury.

For e-learning and home study opportunities, you can find Virginia recognized boating courses on the Web sites listed below:

- boat-ed.com
- boatsafe.com
- BoatUS.com
- pwcsafetyschool.com

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries accepts the boating education courses listed above as meeting the basic requirements to obtain a boating safety education certificate (including PWC operators). These courses meet the minimum standards established by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators



©Jim Crosby

(NASBLA) and include Virginia specific boating laws and regulations. The online courses are provided by private businesses. Should you need to contact them go directly to their Web sites.

BoatUS has an online course they offer from their Web site and challenge you with this statement: "Test your nautical knowledge with our 60 question (50 general boating and 10 state-specific) General Boating Course. This test covers a broad range of topics that are appropriate for power boaters and sailors. You will receive a certificate upon successful completion of this National Association of State Boating Law Administrator's approved course."

While e-learning can meet the requirements, most people agree that they don't offer the three-way communications shared in a classroom between the instructors, the audio-visuals and the participants. Handling fire extinguishers, pyrotechnics, life jackets and learning to tie knots used in good seamanship can best be accomplished in personal contact and with a sharing of knowledge. Students even learn from each other in the exchange.

For classroom offerings, you can contact the Department on their Web site at [www.dgf.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov) or call 804-367-1125.

On-line or in the classroom, a boating course will get you off to a great learning experience that can last a lifetime because the skills come slow and only with practice, practice and practice. But, along with all that effort comes a skill that can be a great source of pride in the accomplishments.

Boating is one of the most beneficial recreational activities one can enjoy, is safe and is most often a family activity.

Please allow me one last admonition: If you recreate on or over the water, wear your life jacket. It's the equivalent to your seat belt on the highway. You may not live without it! □

Jim Crosby currently writes the "On The Water" column for Virginia Wildlife. He specializes in research, writing and photography. He can be reached at jimcrosby@aol.com.

Even if you're a first time boat owner or a seasoned "skipper" learning how to avoid and prepare for boating emergencies can save your life or the lives of those you love.



VIRGINIA WILDLIFE OUTDOOR CATALOG



Photos by Dwight Dyke



Fleece Knee Blankets

These rollup blankets are 100% polyester and measure 50"x 60." Each has our *Virginia Wildlife* logo. Great to curl up with in the old rocking chair or keep one in the car. Available in Red, Grey and Black.

Item #VW-132 \$19.95 each



2005 Limited Edition Virginia Wildlife Collector's Knife

This year's knife has been customized for us by Buck Knives and has a cut out blade of a hunter and his dog. Each knife is individually serial numbered and comes with a distinctive rosewood handle and gold lettering. This custom knife comes in a decorative solid cherry box with a hunting scene engraved on the cover.

Item #VW-405

\$75.00 each



Sheath Knife

This attractive and functional knife has walnut handles with a 3½-inch blade and is approximately 8 inches overall. Made for us by Bear Cutlery, each knife is engraved with *Virginia Wildlife* on the blade and comes with a leather sheath.

Item #VW-404

\$29.95



2004 Limited Edition Virginia Wildlife Collector's Knife

This knife has been custom made for us by Buck Knives. Every facet of this knife indicates that it will be a treasured collectable. From its distinctive handle with gold lettering and brass bolsters to the knife blade engraved with the Department's logo, each knife is individually serial numbered and comes in a decorative, custom wood box with a waterfowl scene engraved on the cover. Limited quantities still available.

Item #VW-403

\$85.00 each



New Collectable Five Piece Coaster Set

Made of solid cherry, this attractive set of 4 wooden coasters is packaged in a wooden box. The box and each coaster have been custom engraved with a deer image.

Item #VW-521

\$20.95

VW-503



VW-502

Buckles

Our bass and duck belt buckle collection is crafted of solid pewter with *Virginia Wildlife* engraved at the bottom. Each buckle comes in a custom gift box with the VDGIF distinctive logo displayed.

Item #VW-502 Bass VW-503 Duck \$9.95 each



VW-500

VW-501

Limited Edition Collector's Plate

The first in a series of *Virginia Wildlife* limited edition collector's plates. This collectable is titled "Winter Comfort" and is taken from an original artwork by Bob Henley. Each plate is individually serial numbered and has the year of issue on the back.

Item #VW-500 \$22.95

Limited Edition Steins

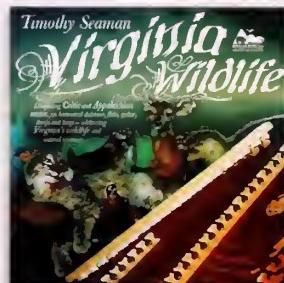
The first in a series of *Virginia Wildlife* limited edition steins. This companion piece to our collector's plate shown above is also individually serial numbered and has the year of issue on the back.

Item #VW-501 \$16.95

Virginia Wildlife Music CD

Virginia Wildlife is excited to offer a compelling and lively array of classic Celtic and Appalachian music that celebrates Virginia's wildlife and natural resources. This musical journey is composed and performed by Timothy Seaman, of Williamsburg, Va., along with guest appearances from other musical masters. (Total time 66:32 min.)

Item #VW-219 \$10.00 each



Bear With Fish

Our bear has caught his fish and is not about to let it get away. This collectable bear is approximately 12 inches high.

Item #VW-518 \$9.95 each



VW-519

Duck With Baby

This baby duck is hitching a ride on its mother. This colorful collectable duck and baby is available in limited quantities.

Item #VW-519 \$9.95 each.

VW-518

Virginia Wildlife Collection of Throws



VW-509



VW-511



VW-507



VW-513



VW-514



VW-520



VW-515



VW-516

Each throw is approximately 52" X 69" and is triple jacquard woven of 100% cotton. Machine washable.

\$39.95 each

Please specify:

Winter Songbirds	Item #VW-507
Down From The North	Item #VW-509
Fall Buck Throw	Item #VW-511
Bend in the Road	Item #VW-513
River Ducks	Item #VW-514
Gallant Tribe	Item #VW-515
The Perch	Item #VW-516
Waiting at Crow Creek	Item #VW-520



Book Clock

This decorative book-style clock is crafted of solid cherry wood, beautifully engraved with a vivid wildlife scene on the book side of the clock. The clock face is of Old World décor, a collector's delight. Clock is 5 1/2" X 8 1/2" when opened.

Item #VW-303

\$29.95 each



Mouse Pad / Coffee Cup Set

It will be hard not to stare at this lifelike picture of a fawn as you sit at your computer and drink your favorite beverage.

Item #VW-223

\$14.95

For the Art Lover or Collector



VW-122 Fawn



VW-122 Blue Birds



VW-211 Cardinal



VW-211 Turkey



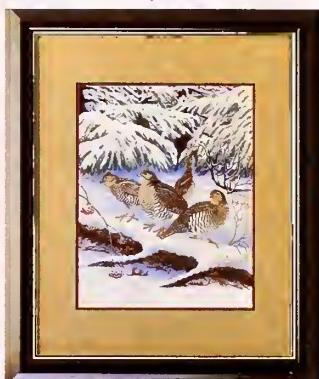
VW-122 Ponies



VW-122 Female Cardinal



VW-211 Deer



VW-211 Grouse

New in 2005, Four New Virginia Wildlife Prints

Each 16"x 20" print is custom framed and has been selected from award winning photographs or original artwork.

Item #VW-122 \$35.95 each

Please specify:

Blue Birds - original artwork by Spike Knuth

Ponies - award winning photo by Clarissa Hull

Fawn - award winning photo by Ruimin Wang

Female Cardinal - award winning photo by Douglas Graham

Framed Prints of Our "Winter in Virginia" Original Paintings.

Each print is custom framed and matted. These attractive prints will brighten any room and are available for a limited time.

Item #VW-211 \$35.95 each

Please specify: Cardinal, Turkey, Deer or Grouse



2005 Limited Edition Collector's Plate

Our second in a series of *Virginia Wildlife* limited edition collector's plates. This collectable is titled "Cardinal in the Pines" and was taken from an award winning photo by Douglas Graham. Each plate is individually serial numbered and has the year of issue identified on the back.

Item #VW-522 \$22.95

Limited Edition Steins

Our second in a series of *Virginia Wildlife* limited edition steins. This companion piece to our Collector's Plate shown above is also individually serial numbered and has the year of issue identified on the reverse side.

Item #VW-523 \$16.95

*Our Virginia Wildlife collection of
Pulsar Watches by Seiko*

Your choice \$59.00 each or 2 for \$100.00



©Dwight Dyke



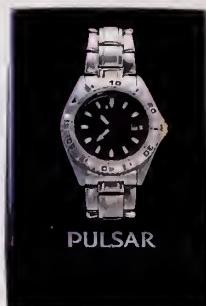
From the Ladies Pulsar collection. This attractive watch has a gold tone bracelet with gold tone hands and markers on a champagne dial. Water resistant.

Item #VW-302



From the Pulsar Nightfall Line. TiCN plating, gold tone crown, hands and markers and black dial. Water resistant.

Item #VW-301



Man's Wrist Watch
Stainless steel bracelet, luminous hands and markers, and blue sunburst dial. One way rotating elasped timing bezel. Water resistant.

Item #VW-300



VW-134

VW-133

Introducing Our New Virginia Wildlife Knit Caps

Each cap is made of 100% cotton. \$11.95 each

Item #VW-133 Orange with Deer

Item #VW-134 Light Grey with Eagle



NEW Virginia Wildlife Hooded Sweat Shirts

These attractive shirts are a 50/50 cotton polyester blend with an embroidered logo and a full zipper front. Sizes : Med., Large, X-Large and XX-Large.

\$21.95 each

Item #VW-127 Black w/Eagle

Item #VW-128 Navy w/Duck

Item #VW-129 Grey w/Deer



Fleece Vests

New to our product line for 2005 these attractive vests are 100% polyester and carry the *Virginia Wildlife* logo. Available in Red, Black, and Grey. Sizes: Med., Large, X-Large and XX-Large.

Item #VW-131

\$24.95



NEW Outdoor Zipper-Front Vest

For the outdoorsperson it comes with a mesh lining and has 5 pockets. Natural color with a Trout embroidered above the pocket. Available in Sizes: Med., Large, X-Large and XX-Large.

Item #VW-130 \$45.95





Virginia Wildlife T-Shirts

TShirt with eagle,available in Black, Navy and Teal
Item #VW-100 \$12.95 each



VW-104

VW-103



VW-109

VW-110

VW-111

Denim Shirts

100% cotton,pre-washed,long-sleeved denim shirts with embroidered logo. Available in sizes Med.,Large, X-Large and XX-Large.
\$12.95 each

Item #VW-109 Cardinal

Item #VW-110 Eagle

Item #VW-111 Trout



VW-108

VW-105



VW-105

Virginia Wildlife Sweat Shirts

These attractive shirts are a 50/50 cotton polyester blend,with an embroidered logo. Available in sizes Med.,Large, X-Large and XX-Large.
Please specify size,color and logo.

\$17.95 each

Eagle in Black,Navy and Khaki

-Item #VW-105

Trout in Grey,Navy and Khaki

-Item #VW-106

Deer in Black,Grey and Khaki

-Item #VW-107

Cardinal in Black,Navy and Rose

-Item #VW-108

VW-116

VW-118

VW-113

VW-111

VW-114

VW-112

VW-120



Virginia Wildlife Caps

Our caps feature three unique designs. Each cap is 100% cotton, size adjustable and embroidered with the *Virginia Wildlife* logo.

\$11.95 each

High profile - deer - Item #VW-118

Low profile - deer - Item #VW-117

High profile - bass - Item #VW-116

Low profile - bass - Item #VW-115

High profile - Camo with Black Letters - Item #VW-113

High profile - Blaze Orange - Item #VW-114

High profile - Camo with Tan Letters - Item #VW-112

High profile - Virginia Wildlife - Item #VW-120

High profile - Virginia Wildlife - Item #VW-119



VW-121



VW-122

Virginia Wildlife Caps

Our *Virginia Wildlife* hats are available in 100% cotton or in denim and are size adjustable. These attractive hats have been embroidered with our *Virginia Wildlife* logo and feature either an eagle or trout for the wildlife and fishing enthusiasts. Hats are available in high profile. Check out our new low profile denim hats. These hats look great with our new denim shirts. \$11.95 each.

High profile -

Navy with Trout - Item #VW-121

Black with Eagle - Item #VW-122

Low profile - Denim with Eagle - Item #VW-123

High profile - Denim with Trout - Item #VW-124



VW-123



VW-124



VW-126

NEW *Virginia Wildlife* Caps for 2005

Our new caps are made of blue denim with a black suede bill and feature either an eagle or a duck.

\$11.95 each

Item #VW-125 Eagle

Item #VW-126 Duck

Please Allow 3 to 4 Weeks for Delivery

Item #	Name of Item	Qty.	Size	Color	Price	Total Price

Make checks payable to *Treasure of Virginia* and mail to:

Virginia Wildlife Catalog, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104

For credit card orders call (804) 367-2569

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Signature

Please Print Name

Daytime Phone Number

Subtotal

Shipping and Handling

7.25

Total

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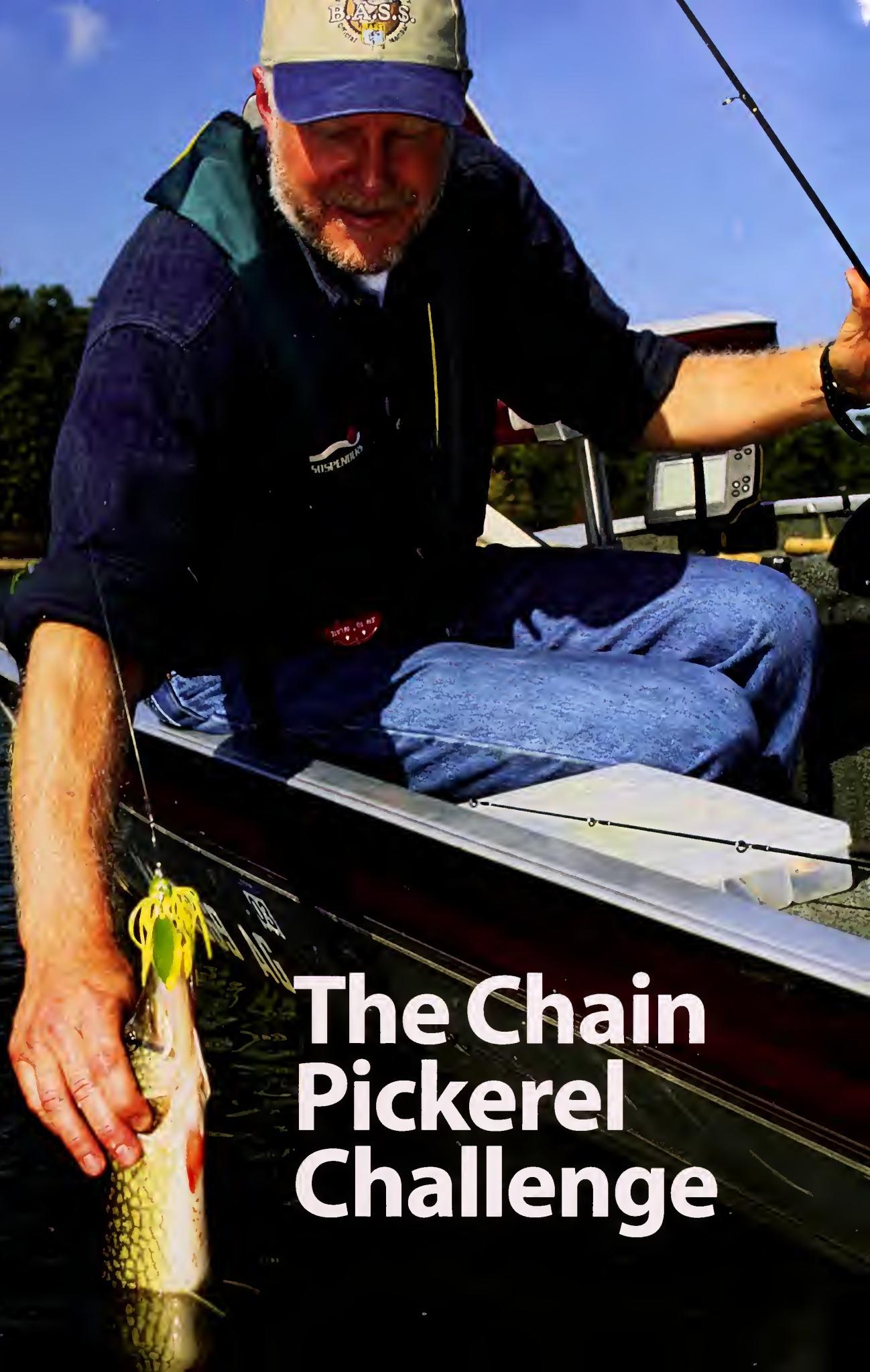
Name

Address

City

State

ZIP



The Chain Pickerel Challenge



by Gerald Almy

While most gamefish in Virginia offer their best angling opportunities in spring, there's one species that marches to a different drummer. *Esox niger*, the chain pickerel, is just beginning its heaviest feeding of the year now, as waters begin to cool with fall's approach. This gamefish will provide some of the very best angling of the year even later, as leaves break loose from shoreline trees and water temperatures plummet into the 40s. Fishing for pickerel is good now, but look for it to get steadily better as days shorten and frosts bathe shoreline fields in a glimmering coat of hoarfrost.

How cold can it get and still offer good pickerel fishing? Two friends and I found out on a bitter winter day a few years back when we visited Buzzard's Roost Pond on Fort A.P. Hill. To get to the fish, we chopped holes through 5 inches of ice! Using jigs and live shiners, we managed to catch half a dozen pickerel before the thermoses of hot coffee and soup ran out and we called it quits.

But whether you try to catch pickerel through the ice (4 inches minimum for safety) or head out now in late summer, it helps to understand a bit about the behavior patterns and unique traits of this lean, prehistoric-

Best described as "freshwater tigers," the chain pickerel is a fast and hard-hitting species that is full of surprises.

looking fish. Learn something about the unique personality of the pickerel and you'll be rewarded with a heavier catch at the day's end.

Pickerel are the smallest members of the pike family, with northern pike bigger still, and muskies at the top of the heap. The world record chain pickerel was caught in Georgia in 1961 and weighed 9 pounds, 6 ounces. Virginia's biggest chain pickerel was landed in Lake Shawnee on New Year's Eve in 1996 and weighed 7 pounds, 10½ ounces. A fish that meets or exceeds 4 pounds or 24 inches can be entered in the Virginia Angler Recognition Program. That latter option is particularly nice where pickerel are concerned, since few people like to keep these fish for eating because of the ubiquitous bones found throughout the flesh.

Pickerel have voracious appetites. Their teeth angle backwards in the mouth, so any victim caught with a quick lunge finds escape impossible. They eat frogs, mice, insects and small snakes, but their overwhelming favorite food consists of other



©Gerald Almy
Chain pickerel can be caught throughout the year and even during the dead of winter when other fish are hard to find.

fish—minnows, chubs, other smaller pickerel and panfish. I once caught a 3½ pound pickerel that fought rather sluggishly for its size. When I worked it in close and scooped it into the boat, it soon became clear why. It had a 6-inch long sunfish swelling its stomach!

The range of pickerel stretches from Texas and Florida north to Canada, with Virginia offering some of the top fishing for chainsides found anywhere. The fish are found

in small tannin-stained ponds, natural lakes, blackwater rivers and large impoundments.

For the most part pickerel are homebodies and loners, staying in one spot, often next to weeds, brush or timber and ambushing hapless baitfish or other creatures that swim by. The fish actually contorts its body into an S-shape as it prepares to strike, then hurls itself at the prey in a motion so fast it's sometimes hard for the human eye to detect. At other times, though, particularly as waters cool in fall and winter, they'll cruise in a small area in loose packs, stalking baitfish schools.

For the ambush feeding mode, good places to fish include shallow areas with weed beds, dock pilings,

hominy Lake and River, the ponds of Fort A.P. Hill, Burnt Mills, Whitehurst, Prince, Cohoon, Meade, Western Branch and Little Creek lakes, as well as rivers such as the Mattaponi, Pamunki, Blackwater and Nottoway.

Live Bait Methods

If you want to be sure to catch pickerel on a particular outing, bring a bait bucket full of minnows with you. Lures and even flies can be productive, but day in and day out, no tactic can hold a candle to live minnow fishing. This is an especially good method to turn to when fish are holding in deep water or roving in loose packs. Minnows should be 2 to 4 inches long, either store-bought or

those you've seined in a creek or caught with a trap.

I like to use light to medium weight spinning gear with 6 to 8 pound line and a 6 to 7 foot rod. This same tackle will be perfect for use with lures as well. Fine wire hooks are an advantage, since they can often be bent free when you hang up on bottom debris and logs. Sizes 1 to 2 are best. Attach a split shot or two 12 inches above the hook and you're good to go for casting and retrieving or drift fishing. If you want to leave the bait hovering in one spot longer, attach a float 2 to 6 feet above the hook. Impale the minnow lightly through the back for drift fishing, through both lips from the bottom up for casting or drift fishing.



The preferred method for catching chain pickerel is with a fresh, lively minnow or shiner. Attaching the minnow through the lip on a weedless hook, so not to kill it, and then tossing it into thick grass or cover can be a very effective method.

submerged brush, sunken logs and grassy banks. For cruising packs of pickerel, look for deep holes, points, drop-offs, as well as slow pools and backwater sloughs in rivers.

Although there is some good pickerel fishing in the western part of the state, it's the eastern areas in the Piedmont and especially the Tidewater that offer the top action for chain-sides. Good picks include Chicka-



©Gerald Amy



©Dwight Dyke

If the wind is blowing lightly, drifting is a great way to present minnows to pickerel. Let 30 to 50 feet of line out and drag the bait behind the boat with the spinning reel bail open or the reel on free-spool if you're using a bait-casting outfit. When a fish strikes, feed line for a few seconds, then reel up all slack and set the hooks firmly.

Old timers used to think that you couldn't hook pickerel on the first run with a minnow. The theory was that you had to wait for the fish to turn the bait around in its mouth and then swallow it. I've hooked too many pickerel solidly after giving them just a few seconds and striking on the first run to believe in that theory any more. And besides, since I release almost all the pickerel I catch, the last thing I want is for them to swallow the bait and be hooked deeply. Set up quickly and the quarry will be pierced in the lip, making it

easy to return to the water without injury. If you miss one or two, so be it.

If the wind is calm and drift fishing isn't an option, try slow trolling with an electric motor. Alternately, try anchoring next to cover such as stumps, logs, bridge pilings, weeds and channel edges and cast the minnow towards the structure. You can either slowly retrieve the bait or let it suspend beneath a bobber near the cover.

Tactics with Lures

Artificials can score on pickerel at any depth. For fish holding in deep water, try weedless spoons, diving crankbaits and jigs tipped with pork dressings. Shallow water is where lures really shine at catching chainsides, however. In this situation you're usually targeting fish laying in ambush next to weeds, logs, brush or stumps, waiting for a hapless baitfish to swim by. The water depth can be

anywhere from 4 or 5 feet to as little as 12 inches! In this situation you can often see as well as feel the strike, making the fishing especially exciting.

Topwater lures such as wobblers, prop lures and poppers will score on these fish, particularly if the water is stained or a bit ruffled with wind. If it's clear and still, however, sometimes these big, loud lures will actually spook the fish. If you find that happening, switch to more subtle, sub-surface offerings.

Thin-minnow plugs, which can be delivered gently and have realistic shimmery actions, are particularly good choices in sizes from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Spinnerbaits, spinners and weedless spoons with pork or plastic dressings are also good. Though the fish tend to chew them up a bit, soft plastic jerkbaits are excellent for fooling pickerel. If you are seeing more wakes from fish fleeing than strikes, scale down to smaller, lighter offerings. This is particularly important on windless days when fish are holding very shallow.

In general a moderate to fast retrieve is most effective for pickerel, but at times it pays to slow down. Steady motion is typically best, but at times a stop-and-go retrieve entices strikes from reluctant fish.

Fly-Fishing for Chainsides

You won't find a lot of long-rodgers out on lakes and rivers pursuing



©Gerald Amy



Above: Chain pickerel are aggressive feeders and will go into the attack mode when you use a lure that resembles a minnow. Below: The late Don Arthur helped to put Chickahominy Lake on the map as one of the best locations in Virginia for catching chain pickerel.

pickerel, but this tactic can be surprisingly effective. Since pickerel are often found in shallow water, it is a perfect way to present frog or insect imitations close to stumps or logs and twitch them temptingly or suspend minnow imitations next to a weed bed and strip them back seductively like a hapless baitfish.

A 7 to 8 weight rod 8 to 9 feet long and a floating weight forward or bass taper line is perfect. Add a 5 to 9 foot tapered leader with a 6 to 10 pound tippet and you're set.

Late summer and fall are great times to try topwater flies. Go with spun deer hair, cork or foam poppers imitating frogs, mice or large insects

in sizes 1/0-6. Drop them down as gently as possible next to fallen logs, brush piles, weed beds or points, let the ripples dissipate, then nudge them gently. If that doesn't draw a lunging take, wait a few seconds before beginning an erratic, twitching retrieve.



With bass you'll usually draw a strike after the first twitch or not at all. Pickerel are different. Sometimes they might follow the surface fly halfway back to the boat before nailing it with a spray of water.

On days when topwater offerings draw little action, streamers are the best fly choice. Minnows are the favorite food of these fish, and patterns such as the Zonker, Clouser Minnow, Woolly Bugger, Matuka, Half and Half and Lefty's Deceiver are deadly in sizes 2/0 to 4.

Deliver these next to cover or work them over points and dropoff edges. Let them sink anywhere from a few inches to a few feet, then begin a stripping retrieve. Keep the rod tip low to the water and pull 6 to 12 inches of line at a time in sharp spurts with pauses in between the jerks. That lets the fly suspend and dart temptingly, like a real minnow would.

If the water is over 5 or 6 feet deep, try using a sinking-tip line or adding a small split shot a foot ahead of the fly to get it down in the strike zone. In general I use a slightly faster retrieve for pickerel than bass, but sometimes in cold water they'll nail a streamer just crawling along at a snail's pace. On occasion it even pays to drop the stop-and-go method and just use a steady hand-twist retrieve like you would fish a wet fly for trout.

Whether you use flies, lures or bait, though, don't overlook the chain pickerel. As fall and winter approach and action for some gamefish starts to slip, this feisty green quarry will just bite better and better until snow in the air and ice in the rod guides eventually drive you inside to warm up by a crackling fire. But then again, maybe you'll just stick with it, wiping the flakes away and flicking out the ice to keep after this intriguing quarry.

There's something about pickerel fishing that gets in your blood. Once you've caught a few, it's hard to kick the habit. □

Gerald Almy is a fulltime outdoor writer and photographer and has been a regular contributor to Virginia Wildlife magazine for over 20 years.

The “Troop 700” Buck



by Ken Perrotte

In a time when many avid deer hunters seem preoccupied with quests for big antlers, Jerry Sims unabashedly admits to being a “meat hunter,” eagerly taking advantage of Virginia’s ample hunting season to stock the freezer with venison.

Sims’ wife Liz has been known to lift her eyes skyward and groan a little when he pulls into the driveway of their Ashland, Virginia, home with

yet another white-tailed deer loaded on the hitch carrier of his aging Jeep Cherokee.

The healthy meat finds its way to many family and friend’s tables, but it tends to earn the greatest raves when it graces the wood-fired cooking spit of a Boy Scout camp.

Sims, the Region 5 wildlife biologist manager for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, has also had a lifelong connection with Scouting.

“My interest in shooting began as

Above: Harvesting that “deer of a lifetime” is something that most hunters only dream about. Photo by ©John R. Ford.

Right: But for Jerry Sims (right), a long-time Boy Scout troop leader in the Richmond area, that buck of a lifetime came true and the story behind the hunt is as big as the deer that now hangs on his wall.

a Cub Scout where we would shoot 22’s at a basement range at a gun shop in Annandale. This led to my dad giving me my first rifle on my eleventh birthday,” Sims recalled.

He credits the Boy Scouts with

A gift from grateful scouts gives their longtime leader a deer to remember.



©Ken Perrone

keeping him outdoors and inspiring him to want to work with wildlife. He saw his first set of deer tracks on a Cub Scout hike.

"We camped in various places throughout Northern Virginia, but my favorite activities included white-water canoe trips on the upper Potomac in West Virginia and Maryland and backpacking in the Shenandoah National Park," Sims said.

Today, he's the father of three grown Eagle Scouts. His youngest son Chris just pinned on second lieu-

tenant's bars after graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Scouting goes beyond family ties, however, and Sims served as a Boy Scout troop leader in the Richmond area for more than 15 years. His hunting stories and the venison he'd bring to troop campouts were always hits, as were projects he designed using buckskin and antlers.

"I bring venison and other wild game to most camping trips. Most of the guys enjoy trying a deer or a bear

steak. They can eat all of the jerky that can be produced," Sims said.

His troops have trekked as far south as Florida and as far north as Canada and Maine where they canoed and fished deep, cold lakes. Of course, the many scenic outdoor destinations within the Old Dominion were always popular.

"During my tenure as Scoutmaster the troop camped once a month year around. We only missed two monthly trips during those years, once due to a blizzard and a second



©Ken Perrone

For over 15 years Sims devoted much of his free time to volunteering as a Boy Scout troop leader. When he decided it was time to pass the honor along to a new Scoutmaster, parents and fellow Scouts surprised him with a new muzzleloader rifle as a token of their appreciation.

because the forest was closed due to severe fire weather...I learned how to camp under very severe weather conditions and usually enjoyed it," Sims said.

"I believe the best way to impart a sense of appreciation for the outdoors is to take a young man camp-

ing and allow him to experience the sounds and sights during the days and the nights through all of the four seasons," he continued.

"On one camping trip in Caroline County we all heard coyotes howling. I remember seeing one of my Scouts lose a smallmouth bass to a bald eagle on a trip to Canada where we paddled 90 miles over a 10-day period. On a trip to Maine we saw 20 moose on a 40-mile drive. One night in Goochland County a great horned owl roosting in the trees above serenaded us with spectacular music.

"All of these types of experiences leave lasting impressions," Sims declared.

He has also encouraged Scouts to attend Department educational events. One of his Scouts took a fine buck at a youth hunt on the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge and also won a lifetime hunting license at a squirrel hunt on the Phelps Wildlife Management Area.

He beams with pride when noting nearly 50 young men achieved the rank of Eagle Scout under his tutelage.

Scout Leader's Farewell

Last September, Sims reluctantly advised the families of his Scouts that he was hanging up the uniform as a troop leader. To his surprise, at the September Court of Honor where he turned over the Scoutmaster job to the new leader, the troop presented him a Knight Revolution muzzleloader as a token of their appreciation for the years of support and sharing of knowledge.

"I had no idea I'd receive such a gift. My expectations were to be given a handshake and a certificate of appreciation. I was overwhelmed. It was a gift I would never have purchased for myself. I already had a flintlock and a caplock rifle," Sims said.

The new gun was a luxury he quickly learned to cherish.

Sims was diagnosed a few years ago with macular degeneration, a disease often resulting in blindness. He first noticed the condition when duck hunting, confounded when he realized he had problems with birds flying from his right.

Repeated treatments involving pioneering techniques at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland yielded positive results in slowing the disease's progression.

Reflecting back to the earlier deer season, he recalled missing shots that used to be routine.

"I've always hunted with a primitive gun with open sites, but I'd been experiencing difficulty obtaining a clear site picture. I knew a scope would be helpful. Now I had a new



©Ken Perrotte

gun designed for use with a scope. I put a high quality Nikon scope on the gun and took it to the range where I could see a good site picture and shoot excellent groups," he said.

"I guess I have to face the fact that my old flintlock and caplock won't spend much time in the field with me anymore," he added.

The "Troop 700 Buck" Appears

One of Sims' favorite hunting locations is Fort A.P. Hill in Caroline County. Accessing the installation can be tough, though, as military training is the primary focus and the operations tempo has been high in recent years as military units have been continually training for combat.

Weekends and holidays often see thousands of hunters vying for limited slots in areas available for hunting.

Still, it may have been fate intervening when Sims was unable to gain a hunting slot on Veterans Day 2004. His fallback was to check out a small parcel of leased property in Hanover County, a place usually thick with turkeys and good for an occasional doe for the freezer.

The morning began slowly with Sims perched in a stand overlooking a beaver swamp at daylight. Nothing appeared.

"My plan was to take a stand for an hour or so and then leave the woods for the day," he explained.

Many hunters start getting mid-day doldrums by late morning, but when the whitetail rutting season is in full swing, daylong vigilance often pays off.

At 10:00 a.m., he moved several hundred yards to a ridge top and a patch of thick timber that had all indications of being a deer travel corridor; but, visibility through the thick brush was barely 30 yards—and that was only down a few shooting lanes.

Sims describes sitting at the foot of a black oak and blowing several times on his grunt tube deer call, issuing a few notes mimicking the sounds of a mature buck. He figured if a big boy was anywhere within earshot, it might wander over to size up the interloper invading his territo-



Lee Walker

Using the Boone & Crockett Club's scoring system, Sim's 10-point buck measured 166 points and the antlers beams measured nearly 24 inches. Over the years Sims has harvested quite a few quality deer. Thanks to the skilled hands of Joey Cordo, a wildlife taxidermist from Chester, this particular trophy will continue to be admired for years to come and will always hold a special place in Sim's heart.

ry. Really, though, he didn't expect anything to appear.

"I relaxed at the foot of the tree, popped open a can of beanie-weenies and began enjoying my breakfast with a plastic spoon, my gun resting across my lap" he said.

Almost simultaneously, his pager began buzzing. A pager call to a biologist almost always means there is an issue somewhere that requires response. This could include anything from a nuisance bear to a potentially rabid fox in a backyard.

"I was fumbling around, trying to check the pager and eat the snack when I happened to look up and there, at the edge of the thicket, stood the biggest buck I'd ever seen in the woods.

"I dropped everything and pulled the muzzleloader off my lap, quickly found the deer in the scope and squeezed the trigger, while the pager



was buzzing a second time in my shirt pocket," he said with a laugh.

The smoke from the muzzle obscured his view and the deer had obviously bolted at the shot. He reloaded. Given the situational abruptness, Sims wasn't certain he had connected. Indeed, as the minutes ticked by he convinced himself he had surely missed, blaming it on the new technology he cradled in his hands.

He took up after the buck's trail, hoping against nagging doubt that his muzzleloader's bullet had found its mark.



Sims is a proud parent of three boys who have all reached the ultimate goal of Eagle Scout. "Hunting, like Scouting, is a great way to spend time with your children" says Sims "it's also a great way to offer them experiences that they will remember for a lifetime."

Not far from where the deer had stood, he spied a spot of blood; a few feet further a puddle revealed he clearly had made a good hit. Just 40 yards into the thicket, Sims found the buck. As he knelt to grasp the animal's massive antlers, he couldn't believe his good fortune.

"I never realized he was so big until I saw him on the ground," Sims said. "Usually a buck looks smaller after you shoot him. This one never shrank!"

Sims' deer, aged at 5½ years old, racked up 166 points under the Boone & Crockett Club's scoring system for trophy deer when it was

scored "green" before the required 90-day minimum drying period for the antlers. The buck's typical rack wasn't symmetrical, sporting 6 main-frame points on one side and 4 points on the other. It also had two "kicker" points growing off the main tines. It had incredible mass in the 24-inch-long antler beams that carried nearly to the tips.

The deer had an injured leg opposite the side that had the 4-point beam. Some biologists theorize that when a deer injures a leg, the impact is seen in the opposing antler. Following that notion, if Sims' deer hadn't been injured, it might have might have developed as a 6x6 and would have easily notched a B&C score of 180 or better, making for the record book.

Still, it should easily qualify for the National Muzzle Loading Rifle

Association's Longhunter record book, if Sims chooses to enter it.

"My first deer hunt was on Quantico Marine Corps Base in 1965. It's taken me a long time to find the big one," Sims said. "I had killed several nice deer on this property in previous years but my expectations were to shoot a small doe.

"This buck will always be a reminder of my troop and the many Scouts and leaders that I have had the pleasure to work with. His antlers will be displayed in my "Scout room" at my house next to the framed troop flag and other mementos I've collected," Sims said. "Fate or not, he will always be my Troop 700 buck." □

Ken Perrotte is a writer and outdoor columnist for the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star and lives in King George County.



2005 Outdoor Calendar of Events

September 24: Flyfishing Workshop at Raven Rock Park in Harrisonburg, Va. Contact Angling Education Coordinator at 804-367-6778.

September 24: Celebrate *National Hunting and Fishing Day* at a VDGIF Wildlife Management Area. For more information visit the Department's Web site at www.dgif.virginia.gov.

September 24: *National Hunting and Fishing Day Event*, at C.F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area, Fauquier County. Contact Lt. Dodson at 540-899-4169.

October 2005: Bass Fishing Workshop at Amelia Lake on the Amelia WMA. Contact Angling Education Coordinator at 804-367-6778.



Corn? What Corn? by Jennifer Worrell

Last year's opening day of dove season was quite eventful for Sergeant Carl Martin of Frederick County. The day began with a citizen complaint about birdshot raining down on his house from nearby hunters. Martin responded immediately and saw corn scattered on the edge of fields close to the nervous resident's home. He had followed the trail of corn for nearly a half-mile when he happened upon three hunters sitting near the com-

plainant's property and the illegal corn. Naturally, they claimed to know nothing about the corn. One had already harvested his limit—the birds were field dressed in his cooler. As Martin finished his dealings with these hunters, he heard more shooting. A quick search led him to two more hunters surrounded by delicious bird bait. Both men had decoys set up right in the middle of the trail of corn he had been following. When Martin questioned the hunters, they shrugged their shoulders innocently.

"Corn? What corn?" they asked, in an Oscar winning bewilderment performance.

Martin could only shake his head as he wrote the summonses. Fortunately, the landowner's grandson arrived on the scene to tell the men that dinner was on the table. Seeing the game warden there with his buddies obviously made him uncomfortable, and his performance was not nearly so convincing as the others had been. Martin's questioning easily elicited a confession from the sheepish young man—he had actually been the one to spread the corn so his pals could have better luck hunting.

Cornered, the guilty men had quite a bit of explaining to do in federal court when Martin called the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agent to report the case. □

VOWA Announces

2004 Awards

by Marika Byrd

The Virginia Outdoor Writers Association, Inc. (VOWA) cited winners at its annual meeting recently for "Excellence-in-Craft" and the Youth Writing Contest for 2004. The winners are presented in the first, second and third place order.

Article: King Montgomery's

Ghosts of the Rappahannock, was in the February-March, 2004 issue of *Southern Anglers Journal*; Curtis Badger made it twice in this category for "Happy as a Clam," in *Virginia Living* for April 2004 and again for the April 21, 2004, issue of *Eastern Shore Times* by means of "The Last of the Silence."

Column: Ken Perrotte's "River Provides an Oasis from Hectic Pace," was presented to readers of the *Freelance Star* (Fredericksburg) on April 15, 2004. "Laurel Fork is Virginia's Slice of the North," prevailed for Nancy Sorrells which appeared in the Staunton News Leader, October 14-20, 2004. Bill Cochran was selected for "Getting the Game Department Back on Track," in the December 30, 2004 issue of the *Roanoke Times*.

Photo Essay: "National Wildlife Refuge System, in *Virginia Wildlife*, gave King Montgomery top honors in this category. Emily Grey's, "Journey to Earth's End," came out in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Mark Fike, delighted readers of *The (King George) Journal* with "Signs of Spring."

Photography: Internationally renowned Lynda Richardson took on an assignment for the *Smithsonian Magazine*'s October 2004 issue with "Channel Island Fox." Secondly, her "Peregrine Falcon made the cover of the December 2004 *Virginia Lawyer Magazine*. Emily Grey was yet again recognized for "Chinstrap Penguin" for January 2004 in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

Book: Lillie Gilbert and Vicki Shufer wrote a "Wild River Guide to Dismal Swamp Water Trails." "So You'd Like to Have a Pond" rewarded Corbin Dixon. Mike W. Smith's, "Fishing the Shenandoah Valley" landed him recognition.

Newsletter: Vicki Shufer and Eco-Images produced "The Wild Foods Forum." Nancy Sorrells won once more with "The Bulletin," for the

Virginia Plant Society. Robert Thomas reeled in one in "The Singing Reel," for Fly Fishers of Virginia.

VOWA also annually recognizes three youth from Virginia in the Youth Writing Contest. The goal of the annual contest is to reward young people for excellence in communicating their personal experiences in the outdoors. This year's theme was "What I Learned About Myself From An Outdoor Adventure." Two of the three 2004 Youth Writing Contest winners were in attendance and read their essays. The winners were: Katie Godwin, Hampton; Benjamin Gahagen, Culpeper and Ellen Nein, West Point.

The youth competition is open to all Virginia students in grades 9 through 12. Interested students can find contest guidelines at www.vowa.org. Watch the Web site later this year for the 2005 contest information.

One of the winning essays is printed below. Read on!

"What I Learned About Myself From an Outdoor Experience"

by Katherine Godwin, Age 16
Phoebe High School

Two years ago, I was fortunate to be selected for a group of 15 girls from around the United States to participate in a wider opportunity, an individual Girl Scout opportunity to travel and explore interests. For "Natural Science In the Tetons," I was flown to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to help in several natural studies and learn about scatology, bird banding, limnology, animal signs, and riparian and terrestrial environments. The experience was unforgettable and I often look at the many photographs I took just to ensure that I didn't dream the entire affair.

The variety of encounters I had was incredible, and I am amazed that it took only a week to accomplish so many things. I climbed a 13,000-foot mountain and visited a glacier in the middle of scorching July, and I waded into a beaver-created stagnant pool to test water conditions. I visited museums and mountain

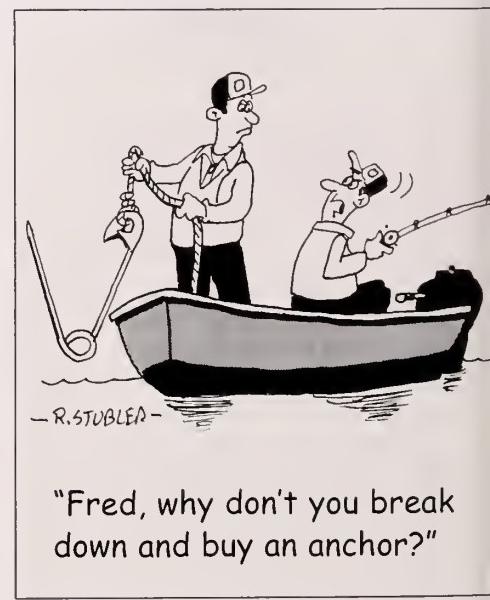
peaks, observed bison, elk, mule deer, snowshoe hares, moose, ground squirrels and numerous other unique creatures in their natural, unimpeded habitat. I heard coyotes howling in the twilight and woke at dawn to catch glimpses of elusive moose drinking from cool mountain-fed brooks. At the end of the day, exhausted, I'd retire to my piece of heaven, the top bunk in a real log cabin. Moths plagued me when I'd attempt to leave the light on and read, so I adjusted to nature's clock and read in the early morning light instead. Without television, phones, or radio, I was able to accomplish more in one week than I could in several months with such distractions.

Teamwork skills were heightened drastically in the absence of distractions. We depended on each other for everything from entertainment to help getting out of sticky situations. In an experience with two other girls exploring a beaver lodge, we proceeded to follow beaver tracks across the stream in waders and become firmly wedged in squelching knee-deep mud. Only through intense cooperation and fairly comic trial-and-error were we able to free each other from our sludge prison. During hikes, we also took turns being lookouts to ensure we didn't come within 50 yards of any wild animal. On a several-hour canoe trip across pristine String Lake, two inexperienced paddlers had lodged our canoe on a fallen tree in the shallows. Unable to push off the sandy lake bottom, we had to work together using our body weight to propel the canoe forward. Though we made mistakes, in groups we were able to aid one another and form lasting bonds.

After a long day of research in Ditch Creek, we retired to our bunks and awoke at dawn to search for majestic moose in the same location. We picked the most observant girl to be our lookout, but she warned us that her eyes were sunburned from the light reflected in the creek the day before. Regardless, we asked her to lead the 10 minute excursion before breakfast. After a brief hike, we arrived at the creek and immediately

stopped, hushed, as the lookout whispered that a bear cub was across the water, barely 100 yards away. Standing very still, the group tried to assess where the much more dangerous mother bear might be. Using my camera as binoculars, I zoomed in on the "bear cub" and discovered that it was in fact a bear-shaped log. I filled my group in and we all had a good laugh, but from then on we knew we could fully rely on each other and that it's better to be safe and assume bear-shaped logs are bears than to meet a log-shaped bear and be very sorry.

Most importantly, my experiences in Wyoming solidified my career choice. My interest in water quality began in eighth grade and defined into limnology by tenth grade. In Wyoming, I spent days alongside streams and lakes and learned to live simply, throwing a day's provisions into a backpack and returning at dusk. After the trip, I knew I would be content in a pair of waders for the rest of my life. I learned to appreciate the beauty of nature and woke to bugling elks in the morning instead of an alarm clock. At night, my lullaby was the haunting song of coyote howls as they searched for each other and congregated on a hill in front of our cabin. The trip was such a powerful, life-changing experience for me and I can now be sure that I am entering the right field when I go to college. □



"Fred, why don't you break down and buy an anchor?"

How Well Do You Know Your Trees?

by Craig M. Greco

Take this quick quiz on our native Virginia trees and test your knowledge.

Match the answers in column B to the sentence question in column A.

Column A

1. What tree is nicknamed the "Bee tree"?
2. What tree has difficulty staying buoyant?
3. The tree that was once called the "Grandfather of the Forest"
4. The wood of this tree is primarily used in butcher's blocks.
5. The wood for this tree is ideally used for tool handles.
6. The wood of this tree is prized for fine furniture and gunstocks.
7. This tree is known for being straight grained and shock resistant, holds its shape well after seasoning (i.e. baseball bats).
8. The sap of this tree makes the best syrup.
9. The state tree of Virginia
10. The wood of this tree is ideal for golf-club heads.
11. Due to the bending characteristics of this tree, it is used for toothpicks.
12. Although this plant is toxic to humans, deer love to eat them.
13. In colonial times, this tree was used primarily for ship masts.



c. Bill Lea

14. One of the most important trees found in coastal or swampy areas, known to have "Knees"
15. Very famous for being the "Ideal Christmas Tree"
16. Although this tree is very messy, it is a favorite of songbirds, turkeys and squirrels.
17. Used by Native Americans as the primary wood for bows
18. Sometimes called the "Tulip Tree"
19. The famous "Wye Oak" was of this species.
20. Although a very popular ornamental, the berries are an ingredient in Gin

Juniper
Ash
Black Walnut
American Chestnut
Sugar Maple
Mulberry
Persimmon
Bald Cypress
Taxus A.K.A. Yew

Craig M. Greco is a Certified Arborist and freelance writer and arboricultural researcher living in Hamilton, Virginia.

1. Basswood A.K.A. Linden
2. Ironwood A.K.A. Hornbeam
3. Chestnut
4. Sycamore
5. Hickory
6. Black Walnut
7. Ash
8. Sugar Maple
9. Dogwood
10. Persimmon
11. Paper Birch
12. Taxus A.K.A. Yew
13. White Pine
14. Bald Cypress
15. Balsam Fir
16. Mulberry
17. Osage Orange
18. Yellow Poplar
19. White Oak
20. Juniper

ANSWERS

RECIPES

by Joan Cone

Using Ground Venison

When butchering deer or other large game animals, you will have loads of scraps and other small pieces for grinding. Forequarters from small deer can be used entirely for stew and ground meat.

Do not add fat to ground venison that is to be frozen, as it becomes rancid if in the freezer too long. To make a meat loaf or burgers, just add up to one half pound of ground pork to every pound of ground meat.

If you own a Kitchen Aid mixer, their food grinder attachment is excellent for grinding your venison and will pay for itself many times over.

Menu

- Cucumber Herb Dip*
- Venison Eggplant Pie*
- Fall Salad*
- Maple Gingerbread*

Cucumber Herb Dip

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup finely shredded cucumber, well drained
- 1/2 cup shredded Swiss cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon dill weed
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
- Garlic powder to taste

Mix all ingredients until well blended and cover. Refrigerate at least 2 hours or until ready to serve. Serve with assorted crackers and fresh vegetable dippers. Makes 12 servings, 2 tablespoons each.

Venison Eggplant Pie

- 2 cups peeled, cubed eggplant
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 pound ground venison
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 celery rib chopped
- Garlic power to taste
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 unbaked 9-inch pastry shell
- 1/2 to 1 cup shredded mozzarella

In a medium skillet, sauté eggplant in 2 tablespoons butter until tender, about 5 minutes. In a large skillet, melt additional 2 tablespoons butter and sauté onion and celery for a few minutes. Add garlic powder and venison and cook over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add the eggplant, tomato sauce, parsley, oregano, sugar, salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Remove from heat. Place pastry shell in a 9 to 10-inch deep pie plate and prick with a fork. Add venison mixture and bake in a preheated 375° F. oven for 20 to 25 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese and bake 5 to 10 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Makes 4 servings.

Fall Salad

- 1 package any European-style salad mix
- 1 thinly sliced tart apple
- 1 cup walnut halves
- 1 package (4 ounces) crumbled blue cheese
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar

Combine salad mix, apple slices, walnuts and blue cheese in a large bowl. Whisk together oil and vinegar in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper, if desired. Pour over salad and toss. Serve immediately. Makes 6 servings.

Maple Gingerbread

- 1 cup pure maple syrup
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 egg
- 2 1/3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (optional)
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, melted

Preheat oven to 350° F. Blend maple syrup together with sour cream. Add remaining ingredients gradually until well mixed. Pour batter into a well-greased 12 x 8-inch baking pan and bake at 350° F. for 30 minutes. Serve with whipped cream or whipped topping. Makes 12 servings.





Naturally Wild

story and illustration
by Spike Knuth

Green-winged Teal

Anas crecca

They fly in tight, wheeling formations; twisting and turning with great precision, very pigeon-like. It's not unusual for them to travel in the company of pintails! They often fly in fairly large flocks of up to 40 or 50, although you'll see them in smaller groups of 8 to 12 at times. And, they can fly at speeds of 60 mph, which seems a lot faster because of its small size and erratic flying style.

The green-winged teal is the smallest of our puddle ducks, only about 15 inches in length. The bulk of the green-wings begin coming to and through Virginia in September and October. If open water and food is available they may stay quite far north in winter.

The male doesn't show any distinguishing field marks in flight from a distance; they just look dark! However, if the sunlight hits it right, he'll show a chestnut-colored head with a dark, glossy-green mask, as well as glossy green and black speculum. On the water, the spring male shows a narrow, vertical white crescent just back of its spotted light brown chest, and in front of its gray sides. The female is a dull grayish-brown with lighter and darker V-shaped markings on their feathers and the green speculum. The male looks just like the female early in fall as it goes through its eclipse plumage.

The green-winged teal breeds across the continent from the northern tier of states north to the Arctic tree line. It usually nests near sloughs and marshes but will nest away from water near small shrubby trees and bushes. Its nest is a depression on the ground lined with grasses and downy feathers. About 10 to 12 eggs is a normal clutch, white or buffy in color. Incubation takes 21 to 23 days. Once hatched, the young are led to

water where they feed mainly on insects and insect larvae at first.

As adults, green-wings are mainly vegetarians, eating seeds, leaves and stems of mainly aquatic plants. It is considered one of the best tasting of ducks—even Audubon said it rivaled the canvasback in taste. Some of its other names are partridge duck, sarcelle, or congo. Its old Greek name "Nettion" simply means "little duck." The green-winged teal is the symbol of Ducks Unlimited's Youth program: the Greenwings. □





The New 2005-2006

Virginia Wildlife Calendar



Is Now Available

It's that time of year again to purchase the 2005-2006 Virginia Wildlife Calendar, one of the most informative and beautiful wildlife calendars in the country. No other calendar will give you the best times to go fishing and hunting, unique natural resource information that will amaze and educate you, and spectacular wildlife art and photographs that give you an up-close look at Virginia's incredible wildlife.

The Virginia Wildlife Calendar is a production of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and customers are reminded that the wildlife calendar starts in September 2005 and runs through August 2006. Quantities are limited and sales will run from July 15 through December 31, 2005, so don't wait. Order now!

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